

Are There Additional Benefits We Can Apply For?

Yes. If you live in Vermont, you can apply for subsidized childcare as follows:

- Families who receive federal adoption assistance (*IV-E eligible*) may apply regardless of their income level.
- Families who receive state adoption assistance (*non IV-E eligible*) may apply only if they meet the established income guidelines.
- In either case, families must demonstrate an acceptable service need, or reason, for the childcare (e.g. both parents work outside the home).

It's important to note that a subsidy may not cover the full cost of childcare. For more information, contact our Child Development Division at 1-800-649-2642.

You can also apply for Title XX Services, which can include parent education and intensive family-based services, in the state where you live. The services available vary from state to state and from year to year. If you live in Vermont, ask your worker for more information. If you live in another state, contact the child welfare department in that state.

Where Can I Get More Information?

1. Call the National Adoption Subsidy Resource Center at 1-800-470-6665 or visit them on the web at www.nacac.org/adoption subsidy.html.
2. Call the DCF Adoptions Manager at (802) 241-2131.



Adoption Assistance
for Children in
Vermont Foster Care



Thinking about adopting a child in state custody?
This brochure explains the adoption assistance that might be available to help you, the eligibility criteria, and the application process.

What Is Adoption Assistance?
It is a financial assistance program for people who adopt children with *special needs*. It can include the reimbursement of one-time adoption expenses, medical benefits, monthly payments, and the payment of special services.
You must apply and be approved for adoption assistance before finalizing your child's adoption.

What Children Are Eligible for Adoption Assistance?
To be eligible, children must meet all of the following four criteria when you request adoption assistance:

1. They are in State custody.
2. They are legally freed for adoption.
3. They can only be placed with adoption assistance because, for example, efforts made to place them without assistance were unsuccessful or not in their best interest.
4. They meet Vermont's definition of *special needs*.

How Does Vermont Define A Child With Special Needs?
As one who is younger than 18 and has at least one of the following *special needs*, which makes it reasonable to assume that the child could not be adopted without adoption assistance:

1. Aged 4 or older.
2. Adopted with a sibling (or siblings).
3. Diagnosed with a medical, physical, mental, or emotional disability.
4. Diagnosed to be at high risk for developing a serious medical, physical, mental, and/or emotional disability, based on known risk factors in the child and/or family's background (for example, a family history of serious mental illness, prenatal exposure to drugs or alcohol, or severe sexual abuse).



Who Provides the Assistance?

A child benefits specialist will determine whether an eligible child is entitled to receive:

- Federal Adoption Assistance (IV-E eligible); or
- State Adoption Assistance (non IV-E eligible).

Children who do not meet the requirements for federal assistance, will be covered by Vermont’s assistance program. The benefits available under both programs are similar. The few differences are discussed in the following section.

What Benefits Are Available?

Reimbursement for Adoption Expenses

You (or a third party) may receive a payment of up to \$2,000 for one-time expenses directly related to adopting your child. This can include homestudy fees, court costs, attorney’s fees, and other expenses incurred before the adoption is legally finalized.

Medical Benefits

You may receive medical benefits for your child through Vermont Medicaid, which will help cover the cost of doctor’s visits, prescriptions, hospital care, mental health services, dental care, eye care, and more.

However, if you live/move away from Vermont, coverage will depend on the type of assistance your child receives. If your child receives federal adoption assistance, medical benefits will be provided by the state where you live. If your child receives state adoption assistance, providing medical benefits will be up to the state where you live. Many states will provide medical benefits to children with special needs whether they are IV-E eligible or not.

Monthly Payments Based on Need

You may receive monthly payments to help you meet your child’s ongoing needs. The amount your child could receive is based on the child’s age and special needs as well as your family’s financial situation—but it cannot be more than what the State would have paid had your child remained in a family foster home.

However, if your child’s eligibility for adoption assistance is based solely on #4 in the special needs list, namely that your child is at high risk for developing a disability, we will only make a monthly payment when:

- a) Your child develops a condition related to the risk factor, diagnosed by a professional;
- b) You apply to amend the adoption assistance agreement; and
- c) We agree to provide a monthly payment.

Special Services

You may receive payment for special services for your child including, for example, special dental care; however, only special services that would be provided for a child in foster care will be approved.

Before your request for a special service can be approved, you must:

- Get written approval from the DCF Commissioner or his or her designee;
- Demonstrate that neither Medicaid nor your family’s private insurance, if your child is enrolled in it, will cover the service; and
- Demonstrate that the service, or the funding for it, is not available through another government program or the existing local interagency process.

How Do We Apply for Assistance?

1. You complete an application form requesting assistance: reimbursement of one-time adoption expenses, medical benefits, monthly payments, and/or special services.
2. The worker finalizing your child’s adoption completes a *Determination of Special Needs* form.
3. You and your worker gather and attach the required supporting documents, such as your most recent income tax return and documentation from a medical professional.
4. Your worker submits your application package to the department’s Adoption Assistance Committee.
5. The Committee determines if your child is eligible for adoption assistance and if so, prepares an adoption assistance agreement that sets out the amount and type of assistance your child may receive and the terms and conditions of the contract.
6. The Committee submits the proposed agreement to the Deputy Commissioner of DCF’s Family Services Division for approval.
7. Your worker presents the offered adoption assistance agreement to you.
8. If you agree with it, you sign the agreement and your worker returns it to our central office for processing. If you have any concerns about the agreement offered, your worker will present them to the Committee.

To get benefits, you and DCF must sign the adoption assistance agreement before your child’s adoption is legally finalized. This means you should submit your application as early on in the process as possible.

When Does Adoption Assistance End?

Adoption assistance typically ends when a child turns 18; however, if a child has a medical, physical, mental, or emotional disability that warrants assistance beyond age 18, the DCF Commissioner or designee may authorize the continuation of some or all benefits until the age of 21.

Can We Appeal a Decision about Adoption Assistance?

Yes. You have 30 days to appeal the Department’s decision to deny, reduce, change, or terminate adoption assistance. To do so, you must write to the clerk of the Human Services Board at the address below.

The board is a citizen’s panel created by the legislature to hear appeals of decisions made by any department within the Agency of Human Services.

You can get a copy of the fair hearing rules and a *Request for a Fair Hearing* form by calling (802) 828-2536 or going online at humanservices.vermont.gov/boards-committees/hsb/

Human Services Board
120 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05620-4301

